

**What is claimed is:**

1           1. A method for use in a collaborative system comprising the steps of:  
2           setting up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively communicate;  
3           automatically collecting presence information of each of said participants in said  
4           group; and  
5           dynamically displaying a visual representation having a plurality of display  
6           windows including at least said participants, said collected presence information, and a  
7           set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said displayed presence  
8           information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one or more others of  
9           said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.

1           2. The method as defined in claim 1 further including a step of a participant of  
2           said group employing said displayed presence information and at least one of said  
3           mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said participants in  
4           said group.

1           3. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein said prescribed mode of  
2           communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.

1           4. The method as defined in claim 3 wherein said step of dynamically displaying  
2           includes a step of automatically updating one or more of said plurality of display  
3           windows.

1           5. The method as defined in claim 4 wherein said step of automatically collecting  
2           presence information includes a step of automatically updating said presence information.

1           6. The method as defined in claim 5 wherein said presence information for a  
2           participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of  
3           predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.

1           7. The method as defined in claim 6 wherein said set of mechanisms includes at  
2           least email, chat, voice call, or the like.

1           8. The method as defined in claim 6 further including a step of maintaining said  
2           collected and updated presence information and a step of notifying said participants of  
3           changes of status in said presence information for said participants in said group.

1           9. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein said step of dynamically displaying  
2 further includes display windows for displaying at least documents and uniform resource  
3 locators (URLs) to information to be discussed.

1           10. The method as defined in claim 9 wherein said set of mechanisms further  
2 includes persistent chat and said step of initiating communication further includes  
3 initiating a persistent chat session.

1           11. The method as defined in claim 10 wherein said step of initiating  
2 communication further includes a step of setting up third party calls.

1           12. Apparatus for use in a collaborative system comprising:

2           means for setting up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively  
3 communicate;

4           means for automatically collecting presence information of each of said  
5 participants in said group; and

6           means for dynamically displaying a visual representation having a plurality of  
7 display windows including at least said participants, said collected presence information,  
8 and a set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said displayed  
9 presence information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one or more  
10 others of said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.

1           13. The invention as defined in claim 12 further including a means for allowing a  
2 participant of said group to employ said displayed presence information and at least one  
3 of said mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said  
4 participants in said group.

1           14. The invention as defined in claim 12 wherein said prescribed mode of  
2 communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.

1           15. The invention as defined in claim 14 wherein said means for dynamically  
2 displaying includes means for automatically updating one or more of said plurality of  
3 display windows.

1           16. The invention as defined in claim 15 wherein said means for automatically  
2 collecting presence information includes means for automatically updating said presence  
3 information.

1           17. The invention as defined in claim 16 wherein said presence information for a  
2 participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of  
3 predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.

1           18. The invention as defined in claim 17 wherein said set of mechanisms includes  
2 at least email, chat, voice call, or the like.

1           19. Apparatus for use in a collaborative system comprising:

2           a call set up unit to set up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively  
3 communicate;

4           a user agent unit to automatically collect presence information of each of said  
5 participants in said group; and

6           a visual display unit to dynamically display a visual representation having a  
7 plurality of display windows including at least said participants, said collected presence  
8 information, and a set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said  
9 displayed presence information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one  
10 or more others of said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.

1           20. The invention as defined in claim 19 further including a device to allow a  
2 participant of said group to employ said displayed presence information and at least one  
3 of said mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said  
4 participants in said group.

1           21. The invention as defined in claim 19 wherein said prescribed mode of  
2 communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.

1           22. The invention as defined in claim 21 wherein said visual display unit  
2 automatically updates one or more of said plurality of display windows.

1           23. The invention as defined in claim 22 wherein said user agent unit  
2 automatically updates said presence information.

1           24. The invention as defined in claim 23 wherein said presence information for a  
2 participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of  
3 predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.

1           25. The invention as defined in claim 24 wherein said set of mechanisms includes  
2 at least email, chat, voice call, or the like.

1           26. The invention as defined in claim 24 wherein said user agent unit further  
2 maintains said collected and updated presence information and notifies said participants  
3 of changes of status in said presence information for said participants in said group.

1           27. The invention as defined in claim 26 wherein said visual display displaying  
2 further displays windows to display at least documents and uniform resource locators  
3 (URLs) to information to be discussed.

1           28. The invention as defined in claim 27 wherein said set of mechanisms further  
2 includes persistent chat and said set up unit further includes setting up a persistent chat  
3 session.

1           29. The invention as defined in claim 28 wherein said set up unit further sets up  
2 third party calls.